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Earth Network Project

Connecting UNESCO-designated sites
with experts to boost biodiversity





THE EARTH NETWORK PROJECT

SUPPORTING SITES WITH VOLUNTEER EXPERTS

The Earth Network project was launched in 2021 with the support of the Government of Italy. It brings together over 380 experts from more than 60 countries, encompassing diverse biodiversity-related fields that include land restoration, environmental management and environmental law.

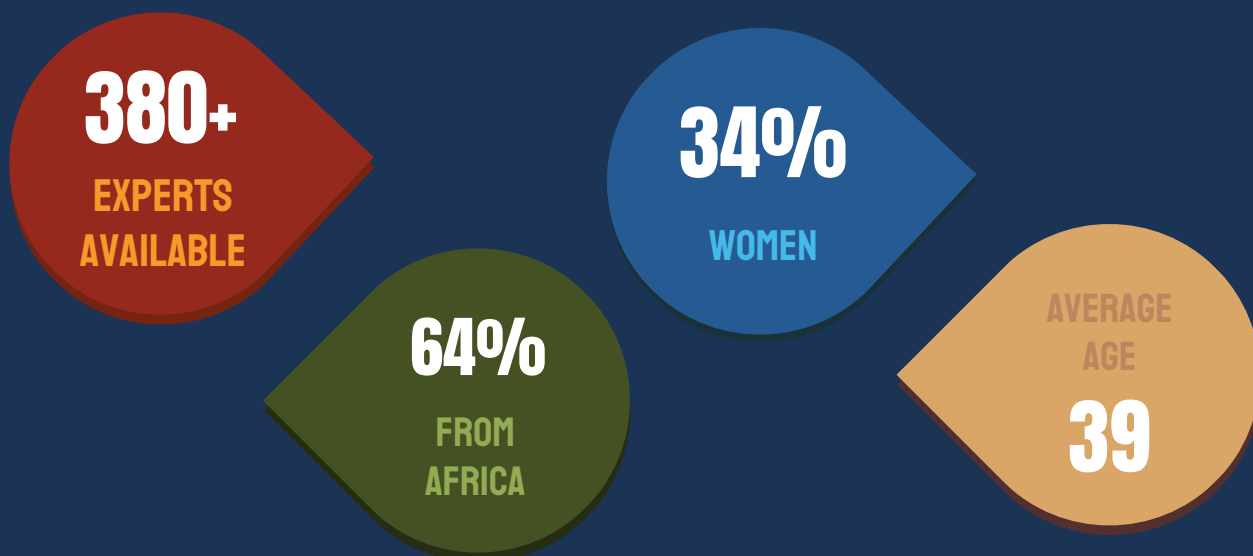
The specialists volunteer to put their unique skillsets and knowledge at the disposal of sites designated by UNESCO which request their assistance. The Earth Network covers all scientific domains and proudly combines different forms of knowledge: scientific, practitioner, local and indigenous.

On the ground, these experts provide technical advice, collect data, build partnerships, and provide training tailored to the specific needs and priorities of each UNESCO-designated site.

PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE, SHARING DATA

The Earth Network contributes to strengthening the knowledge base on ecosystem management, restoration and resilience in UNESCO designated sites or candidate sites. The Earth Network embraces diverse knowledge systems, including scientific, practitioner, indigenous and local knowledge systems.

Experts mobilised through the Earth Network are key contributors to the UNESCO Biodiversity Portal. This is the first global multidisciplinary database covering UNESCO designated sites, as well as a repository of good practices, projects and initiatives addressing issues related to biodiversity and sustainable use.



Join the roster and apply to become an Earth Network volunteer expert
<https://www.unesco.org/en/earth-network/experts>

THE EARTH NETWORK PROJECT

EMPOWERING THE YOUNGER GENERATION

The Earth Network supports young people and youth networks committed to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It informs, educates and supports future generations at local, regional and global levels through workshops and other forms of training.

1000+

YOUNG PEOPLE

trained worldwide on challenges related to biodiversity and ecology

ONLINE CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS

on biodiversity and global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

8

3

TECHNICAL WORKSHOPS ON INDICATORS

held to support the development of indicators measuring meaningful youth participation in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS GATHERING 75+ YOUNG INHABITANTS

of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve in South Africa

2

Youth capacity-building workshops in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, South Africa

Two workshops were organized in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve in 2022 and 2023 to:

- train young people living and working in South African biosphere reserves in communicating about UNESCO biosphere reserves and their contribution to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use
- provide young people from the biosphere reserve and areas nearby the opportunity to find local solutions to the global challenges they are currently facing and to design viable activities for them and the biosphere reserve
- understand better global frameworks such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and establish an action plan on how youth can contribute to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration



© Vhembe Biosphere Reserve

“The inclusion of young people in the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme is essential for ensuring the sustainability of biosphere reserves. Over the past six years, the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve has actively engaged and empowered youth through various programs. The Earth Network’s support has been crucial in empowering the youth in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve. Through two key workshops, our young people have developed vital communication strategies and contributed to the MAB Strategy (2016-2025) evaluation, ensuring their voices are included in future action plans. These efforts have energized our youth network, fostering a sense of belonging and motivating them to become ambassadors of change in their communities.”

Tonderai Makoni, Director of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve



VOLUNTEER EXPERTS' MISSIONS TO UNESCO DESIGNATED SITES



ASANTE TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

GHANA

Safeguarding the living heritage to reinforce sites conservation and biodiversity

DAYS OF TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS

organized and led by the experts

10

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

with local stakeholders

19

Between December 2023 and March 2024, three Earth Network expert volunteers, Deirdre Prins-Solani, Olga Laiza Kupika and Elizabeth Matilda Abena Mantebeah, visited the Asante Traditional Buildings in Ghana.

Situated in villages near Kumasi, these are the last material remains of the great Asante civilization. They were inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1980.

The mission:

- strengthened the capacities of communities to identify, document and safeguard the intangible cultural heritage associated with the sites
- explored how they might contribute to the biodiversity of the sites and associated natural areas
- developed a conservation management plan for these World Heritage properties

"The biodiversity (fauna and flora) of the sites plays an integral role in the life of the communities, and in relation to the sites. The conservation management plans and practices need to take into account the interrelationship between the biodiversity found around and in the sites and the cultural meanings, beliefs and local knowledge associated with them."

EXPERTS

Olga Laiza Kupika (Zimbabwe)

Deirdre Prins-Solani (South Africa)

Elizabeth Matilda Abena Mantebeah (Ghana)



For more information go to <https://www.unesco.org/en/earth-network/missions>



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TONLE SAP BIOSPHERE RESERVE

CAMBODIA

Mobilising experts to strengthen the coordination policy for the development of alternative livelihood strategies for communities living within the biosphere reserve.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

7

with local fishers, women from the communities, rangers, administrators and policy makers

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1

led by the expert with local community members and fishers to identify development opportunities

In December 2023, the expert Radisti A. Praptiwi visited the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve in Cambodia.

Over the course of her on-site mission, she conducted a series of interviews aimed at gathering crucial information regarding available resources, as well as the drivers and barriers to the development of alternative livelihoods. Her mission included an in-depth analysis of the livelihood strategies adopted by the local community.

This work has played a vital role in supporting further analysis of the challenges associated with monitoring management and environmental conservation in the region. Additionally, Praptiwi's research has provided insights into the impact of alternative livelihood projects already implemented in the area, as well as the community's interest in future livelihood development, particularly within the fisheries sector.

The findings from Praptiwi's field trip have led to the establishment of technical recommendations designed to strengthen policy coordination and support the overall development strategy of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve.



Expert

Radisti A. Praptiwi
(Indonesia)

"Tonle Sap Lake provides not only an ecologically important habitat for many biodiversity species but also crucial ecosystem services that are important for the livelihoods, health, and well being of the local communities."

For more information go to <https://www.unesco.org/en/earth-network/missions>



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VIÑALES ASPIRING UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

CUBA

Supporting the mobilisation of experts to Viñales, Cuba, in the context of its candidacy to become a UNESCO Global Geopark

UNESCO and the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) launched a joint initiative in 2022 to promote the Geopark concept in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). As a result, Cuba and the Viñales geopark project applied for and were awarded a grant, consisting of tailormade advice and support from international experts as well as participation in an exchange programme.

As part of the advisory mission, geopark experts Helga Chulepin and Carlos Merizalde conducted an on-site visit in the Viñales area from 18 to 28 February 2024.

Their activities focused on:

- meetings with the local management team to provide strategic advice on enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of the geopark's operations.
- heritage diversity verification, assessing the geological, natural, and cultural heritage.
- maximising the potential of the future geopark through recommendations to increase its visibility.

This advisory mission, through its workshops, field trips and strategic meetings, has set the groundwork for the Viñales aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark to become a model of sustainable development and heritage conservation, benefiting both the local community and the wider region.

FIELD TRIPS

to verify the geological, natural and cultural heritage ensuring its readiness for global geopark status

3

WORKSHOPS

on geopark management, best practices in conservation, sustainable tourism, and community engagement

9



Experts

Helga Chulepin (Uruguay)
Carlos Merizalde (Ecuador)

“Visiting the Viñales Valley confirms the importance of the Unesco Global Geoparks to move towards the development of territories with criteria of sustainability and resilience.”

For more information go to <https://www.unesco.org/en/earth-network/missions>

UNESCO EARTH NETWORK MISSIONS



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As of June 2024

Main areas covered

1. Saint Kitts and Nevis - St. Mary's Biosphere Reserve: Mobilising experts to accelerate ecological restoration
2. Bulgaria - Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve: Building inclusive governance in Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve
3. Cambodia - Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve: Mobilising experts to strengthen the coordination policy for the development of alternative livelihood strategies
4. Ghana - Asante Traditional Buildings: Safeguarding living heritage to reinforce sites conservation and biodiversity
5. Madagascar - Mananara Nord Biosphere Reserve: Training local communities in natural resource management and in modern fishery monitoring systems
6. Cuba - Viñales aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark: Supporting the implementation of a holistic approach to environmental protection
7. Tanzania - Arusha-Meru and Mount Kilimanjaro aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark: Assisting the nomination process for future sites
8. Morocco - Chefchaouen aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark - Assisting the nomination process for potential future sites
9. Madagascar - Assisting the nomination process for three potential future biosphere reserves and supporting ecosystem restoration initiatives



TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS



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2022 March - Switzerland, youth engagement in the Convention on Biological Diversity on qualitative approaches towards area-based conservation

July - South Africa, Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, Communication capacity-building workshop for young communities

November - Costa-Rica, Savegre Biosphere Reserve, Training workshop on ecosystem services assessment and nature-based solutions for mitigating impacts of coastal hazards

December - 4 hybrid consultative workshops for the IOC/MAB Pre-Concept Note to the Climate Change Adaptation Fund at the national level in Senegal, Madagascar, Cuba, Indonesia

December - Canada, 2 MAB Youth workshops on youth perspectives on indicators, UNESCO Biodiversity Portal, and intergenerational mentorship

2023 July - Colombia, Seaflower Biosphere Reserve, Scientific Advisory Group Meeting of the MangRes project on mangrove restoration

October - France, workshop on ancestral and scientific knowledge and scientific know-how

December - South Africa, Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, capacity-building workshop on youth role in implementing global frameworks

2024 May - Kenya, Workshop on youth indicators during the Convention on Biological Diversity SBSTTA-26

Your journey starts here


20%

of mapped global species richness harbored by World Heritage sites

65%

of mammal species and 45% of threatened mammal species hosted by UNESCO biosphere reserves

63%

of all mammal species are in UNESCO World Heritage sites

53

biosphere reserves in tropical humid forests

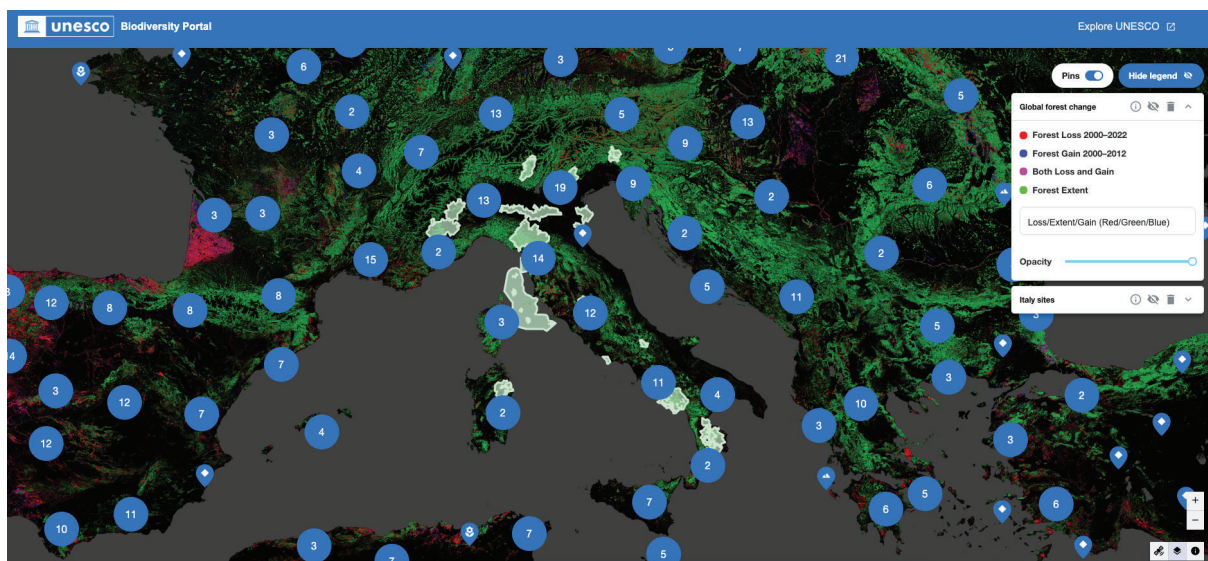
PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE, SHARING DATA

THE UNESCO BIODIVERSITY PORTAL

An interdisciplinary and intersectoral database and web-platform which:

- provides a visualization of UNESCO's contribution to the international agenda on biodiversity and climate change
- shares UNESCO's conservation and sustainable use initiatives, including for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Sustainable Development Goals and other global frameworks
- enables the publication and provision of quality data and indicators associated with UNESCO's unique mandate in science, education and culture and its unique network of designated sites

The Earth Network through its expert missions and trainings contributes to the collection and integration of data on the UNESCO-designated sites.



UNESCO BIODIVERSITY PORTAL


<https://biodiversity.unesco.org/>



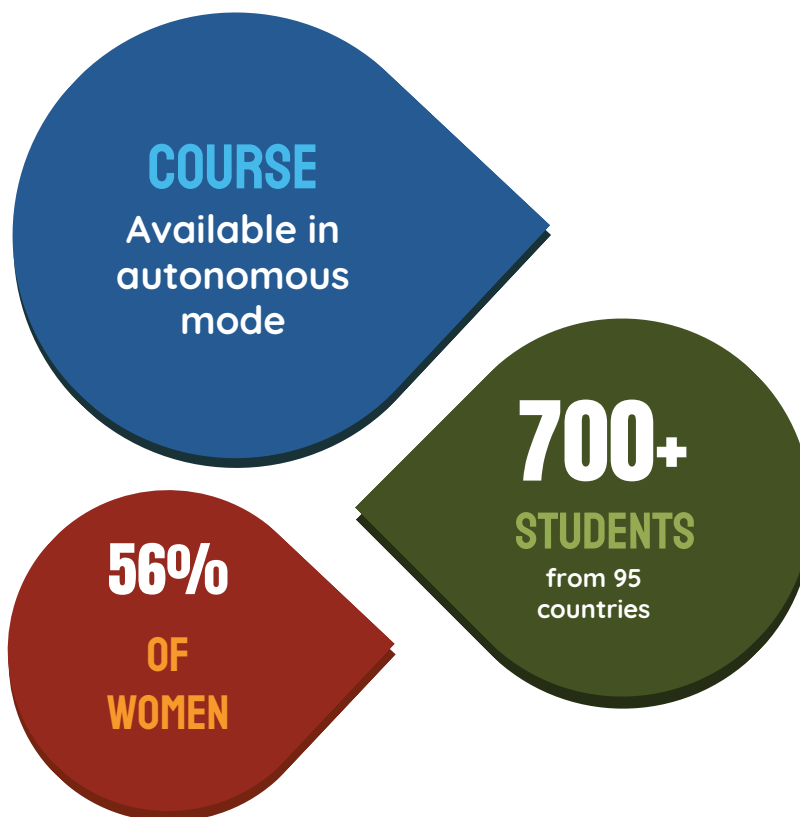
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UNESCO MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE ON “ONE HEALTH APPROACH”

A 10-week Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) was led by Professor Serge Morand of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (*Centre national de recherche scientifique, CNRS*). The renowned French ecologist layed out the concepts, data and methodologies available globally, using concrete examples from sites designated by UNESCO, notably biosphere reserves.

The 15 classes of this MOOC:

- presents the scientific concepts linking healthy ecosystems to healthy human communities
- provides tools and frameworks to enable people to visualize solutions that restore ecosystems and make them more resilient
- shares good practices and innovative solutions from biosphere reserves designated by UNESCO
- provides communities, policy-makers and stakeholders with the knowledge and methodologies required to create better forms of governance that protect territories against emerging risks



MOOC

<https://tinyurl.com/48nf6e99>



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Join the Expert roster, Support the Earth Network!

The Earth Network counts on every possible contribution from individual donors, to be pooled within the Multi-Partner Trust Fund set up to support the project.

There is no threshold for financial contributions. Donors who provide more than USD 200,000 will sit on the Steering Committee of the project.



With the support of
Government of Italy
MINISTERO DELL'AMBIENTE
E DELLA SICUREZZA ENERGETICA



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